

TUCKER DIES, PRO-TESTING INNOCENCE TO LAST MOMENT

Gave Up Life For His Crime
This Morning--Went to
Death Chamber With Amazing
Calmness, and Seats
Himself in Electric Chair.

MEETS DEATH WITHOUT
ANOTHER WORD

Left Long Statement to His
Counsel--Attorney Vahey
Makes a Statement--Gov-
ernor Guild Makes State-
ment In Reply.

Boston, June 12.--Declaring to the
very last his innocence of the mur-
der of Mabel Page, Charles L.
Tucker was electrocuted at the Char-
lestown state prison at 12:14 o'clock this
morning for the murder of Mabel Page
of Weston, on March 31, 1904.

"Tell the warden there won't be a
tear shed," he said, when asked if he
thought he could face the ordeal with-
out physical weakness. So far as he
was concerned, the message was literally
true. Not so much could be said, how-
ever, for the witnesses, or for the officers
whose duty required that they should
execute the mandate of the law. The
fact, however, is a compliment to, rather
than a reflection on, their man-
hood.

BODY TAKEN HOME.

Parents of Tucker Are in a Sort of
Daze.

Boston, June 12.--Tucker's body was
given to the undertaker at seven o'clock
this morning. After it has been prepared
for burial it will be conveyed to the
Tucker home in Auburndale, where a
private service will be held before being
taken to Worcester for burial. It is
not yet decided when the service will
be held.

Walter Tucker, brother of the dead
boy, said this morning that his father
and mother were as well today as could
be expected. They were both up and
around the house, but seemed to be in
a sort of daze, not fully appreciating
that Louis was dead.

REFUSES TO REPLY.

But Gov. Guild Stands by His First
Opinion.

Boston, June 12.--It was stated at the
executive department this morning that
Governor Guild had no comments to
make upon Mr. Vahey's statement, in
which he criticized the governor for his
decision in the Tucker case. Gov.
Guild said that in preparing his answer
to the Tucker petition, every statement
he made regarding the Page murder
or as to the prisoner's acts and habits
was carefully verified by reference to
the public admissions of Mr. Vahey him-
self, or by page and line to the sworn
evidence of the proceedings in the lower
court, in the higher court, at the hear-
ings, or in the council chamber. No
modification of the governor's statement
is, therefore, possible.

The statement referred to was issued
by Attorney Vahey early this morning
was a lengthy answer. Commenting in
it upon the prisoner's general reputa-
tion, Mr. Vahey said:

"In justice to him, certain statements
which have assumed large proportions
and are malicious, unjust, unfair and
entirely untrue, should be noticed. We
believe that the defendant did not have
the slightest responsibility for the death
of his wife. Her people are convinced of
that. The most revolting stories have
attributed to him conduct toward the
bodies of his wife and Mabel Page,
which not only have no foundation in
fact, but have been wickedly and ma-
liciously circulated for the purpose of
injuring this unfortunate young man."

On the failure of the defendant to
testify, Mr. Vahey said:

"It ought to be stated that he (Tuck-
er) had never appeared as a witness
in court; that he had not had any ex-
perience beyond the first few grades of
the grammar school; that the attorney
general was one of the most skillful and
resourceful cross examiners in criminal
trials in this state, and would have
the defendant at a tremendous disad-
vantage because of his arrest to Chief Shaw
of the state police."

THE EXECUTION.

Tucker Went to His Fate Calmly and
Cautiously.

Boston, June 12.--Charles Louis
Tucker of Auburndale was electrocuted
at the Massachusetts state prison at
12:14 o'clock this morning, pursuant
to a sentence of death issued against
him as the penalty of having murdered
Miss Mabel Page, who was found dead
at the secluded home of her father on

a Weston highway, March 31, 1904,
stabbed to death.

The condemned murderer, whose case
had aroused public interest unparalleled
for many years in the history of Mas-
sachusetts crime, and to save whom the
most extraordinary measures had been
undertaken both by his counsel and as
a result of the aggregation of opinion
of a great body of people who believed
him guiltless, walked from the death
cell unassisted and even without the
guiding arm of a prison guard. His
manner was solemn, yet careless. He
walked with precision, yet with indiffer-
ence. The prison guards had opened his
cell door and said:

"Tucker, we are ready."

The condemned man stepped quickly
from his cell and almost before the
legal witnesses to the execution, who
numbered but six persons, had realized
that the moment of the death punish-
ment was at hand, he had appeared
before them in advance of the jail of-
ficials.

Just before reaching the electric chair
he drew forth from the right hand
pocket of his trousers a piece of paper.
From this paper he read mechanically
and in a tone so low that the witnesses
could hear but a few of the words, the
following:

"I hope that God will forgive me for
all the wrongs I have ever done in my
past life. I forgive everybody who
has ever wronged me. I am at peace
with my Maker. May God have mercy
on my soul."

The exact phraseology was only learn-
ed when the paper which Tucker had
replaced in his pocket with wonderful
deliberation and calmness when he had

concluded its reading was removed from
his clothing subsequent to his death.

When Tucker had placed this docu-
ment in his pocket he turned quickly
with water-soaked mittens and sur-
rounding that he might easily find the
seat of the instrument of death, he closed his
eyes and did not open them again. Care-
fully and surely he sat himself in the
chair.

He rested back his head, stretched
out his arms upon the sides of the
chair, there to be strapped in prepara-
tion for the execution. A half dozen
men were quickly bending over him
adjusting the straps, baring his left
leg for the application of the electrode,
securing him tightly by the legs, arms
and body, while the electrician placed
upon his head the mesh-net filled inside
with water-soaked sponges and sur-
mounted by the head electrode. A wide
strap opened in the center to permit
a view of the eyes and nose of the vic-
tim was then fastened about the front
of the head from the back of the chair.

The body plunged forward against the
enclosing straps as Warden Benjamin
E. Bridges raised his right hand and
the electrician threw down the electric
switch. No sounds came from Tucker's
lips after his final words, which he read
from the paper.

The current was applied at 12:12 1/2
and maintained at various voltages for
fifty seconds. At the end of this time
Dr. J. A. McLaughlin, the prison sur-
geon, examined Tucker and reported
that his pulse was still beating. The
current was turned on a second time and
then, after the physician had declared
"his heart still beats" again, for the third
time.

Tucker was pronounced dead at 12:14,
and at 12:19, after all the legal med-
ical witnesses had examined the con-
victed man, he was pronounced officially
dead. The repeated application of the
electric current was made, the physi-
cians explained, not because Tucker was
not dead after the first shock, but be-
cause of the involuntary muscular ac-
tion of the heart and of the pulse which
emanated from the heart action. The
medical witnesses agreed that the elec-
trocution was successful, and all stated
that he was unconscious, if not quite
dead, at the very instant the 1,820 volts
of electricity shocked his body.

In addition to Warden Bridges, his
son, five guards and the electrician, the
witnesses of the execution were the fol-
lowing:

Dr. Joseph I. McLaughlin, the prison
surgeon; Dr. William H. Devine, med-
ical general of the Massachusetts mil-
itary; Dr. William G. McDonald, medical
examiner for Suffolk county; Dr. Ed-
ward B. Uley, physician attached to
the Middlesex county house of correc-
tion; Sheriff John R. Fairbank of Mid-
dsex county; and a press representa-
tive.

The witnesses had commenced the
march to the death chamber at 12:07
o'clock. They had returned to the pris-
on office in less than twenty minutes.
Yet this feeling of self-control was due
chiefly to the man who had died in the
electric chair, who walked to his end
with coolness, deliberation and a half-
dreamy expression of countenance as if
he had planned it all out how he was
to die and had resigned himself to what
he must endure. In short, Tucker was
the coolest man in the death room.

During his last day, Tucker gave evi-
dence that the terrible strain was af-
fecting his mind. His body remained
healthful, but the realization, gradu-
ally brought to his mind by his counsel,
and friends, that his death was but a
matter of a few hours, soon induced
a nervous breakdown and an emotional
collapse. But, despite this, he re-
mained cool and heartily on the day of his
death and retained his composure to the
end.

TUCKER'S LETTER.

Claims His Innocence in the Shadow of
Death.

Boston, June 12.--Tucker's letter to
James H. Vahey follows:

"My Dear James: I will take the
liberty to write you a few words before
this awful thing is executed. Before
I go any further I wish to express my
feelings in this matter. First, I have
been misjudged and wrongfully accused
of a crime that I know nothing about,
one that I am entirely innocent of."

"Second, this peculiar case was purely
circumstantial, and I did not get the
benefit of the doubt."

"Third, some of the members of the
jury signed a letter to the governor
for commutation, which shows that they
had a doubt in their minds, and it
also shows that if they heard this new
evidence over again in court they would
have no doubt brought in a different
verdict."

"Fourth, the stick pin that was pro-
duced in court as evidence by the gov-
ernment was my own property."

"Fifth, the governor had no right to
bring up my past life to connect me with
this crime. A man may steal but there
are limits to everything."

"Sixth, I have had good and faithful
counsel and my innocence would have
been established if witnesses for the com-
monwealth did not tell lies against me
in regard to my own property."

"I want to thank you, James, for
what you have done for me and also for
your associates. You fought a hard
fight for me and I am sure you will
save me how happy I should be."

"If it is awful to die when one is in-
nocent, and when one is so young, good
hearted and healthy. Oh, I am so glad
that I am innocent, dear James, one
feels so much better when one's con-
science is clear. I would tell you will-
ingly if I were guilty and I would make
my peace with God, but I am not, James,
and I die innocent as a child unborn
of this crime."

"I am glad, too, I may have my fault
dear James, and I may have good cou-
rage, but I never could have the courage
or heart to do such an awful thing to a
woman. God alone knows my heart,
and He knows that I did not commit
this awful crime."

"The governor, who I think is very
unjust, has gone against me, and if
nothing turns up to interfere I will
have to die, and I assure you I will
die brave and like a man. I have noth-
ing to confess. I am entirely innocent.
I have never spoken to you about this,
before."

"I have been asked if guilty to con-
fess, but the people that asked me that
I told them this: 'I have nothing to
confess; do you want me to tell a lie?'
That is what I told them, James, and
I really got mad about it. It would be
a lie through and through if I said
anything of the kind. Now, dear James,
after this terrible murder happens I
want my folks to have my little body
so I can be near my dear parents."

"It will be a hard blow to them, but
dear James, it will be a comfort to them
to live knowing that I died an innocent
boy."

"I am sorry for them, they are so
good and faithful. I cannot say any
more, James, tears fall from my eyes
so fast I can hardly see to pen these
words to you."

"Before I close, thought, I want to
thank everybody that tried to help me
prove my innocence, and I also thank
you again for being so kind and faith-
ful."

"My last words to you are that I am
innocent, and they will be the last words
I will have on my lips when I die. I am
yours very truly,
"Charles Louis Tucker,
"Sunday, 10 a. m."

EVIDENCE WAS UNPRINTABLE.

"No Man Was Ever Executed in Mas-
sachusetts on Clear Evidence."

In referring to Gov. Guild's review
of the Tucker case, the Boston news
bureau says:

"But what interests State street
most is the magnificent review by Gov-
ernor Guild in the Tucker case. He
has redeemed the newspaper press of
Boston, which had never given full con-
sideration to the evidence against Tuck-
er. A large part of the evidence was
unprintable, even though read in
court room, and a large part of it was
so far unprintable that by agreement
of counsel the court ordered that it
should not be read, but should go direct-
ly to the jury-room. But the damaging
evidence against Tucker's defense of
an alibi was never presented in the
papers of largest circulation in Boston."

The result was, therefore, a public sen-
tence that Tucker had not been proved
guilty, because thousands of people had
never read evidence in the newspaper
press that convinced them his guilt had
been proved. As a matter of fact, no
man was ever executed in Massachusetts
on clear evidence, barring confession of
observation of the crime. There was
probably never a case in this common-
wealth that in all its ramifications was
so thoroughly sifted from the executive
chamber, nor has there ever been one
concluded more thoroughly in the inter-
est of right and truth. That Governor
Guild has reflected credit not only upon
his business profession, and the genera-
tion of younger men now in official and
political life, but upon the common-
wealth and its executive chair, is the
sentiment of State street."

PARLIAMENT PAY ATTACHED.

Hungarian Deputies Gambled and Did
Other Things.

Vienna, June 12.--One hundred and
seventy-two deputies of the New Hun-
garian parliament have had their par-
liamentary pay attached by the courts,
on the application of creditors. The at-
tachment in 20 cases is due to gambling
debts, 14 to election expenses. Twenty-
six deputies left their families without
support and were called on to pay al-
imony, and the rest were sued on prom-
issory notes.

THIEVES START CONFLAGRATION

Section of Sodus, N. Y., Prac-
tically Wiped Out

LOSS IS NEARLY \$100,000

A High Wind Swept the Flames in
Both Directions--One Fireman
Was Killed in South
Omaha.

Rochester, N. Y., June 12.--Fire,
which is supposed to have been started
by the men who were burglarizing a
Gaylord store in the village of Sodus,
practically wiped out the eastern busi-
ness section of the village early this
morning. A high wind swept the
flames in both directions and more than
a dozen buildings were destroyed, caus-
ing a loss upwards of a \$100,000.

ONE FIREMAN KILLED.

By Falling Wall of Armour Plant in
South Omaha.

Omaha, Neb., June 12.--Fire early to-
day destroyed the buildings containing
the oilcomparine department of the
Armour company's plant in South Om-
aha. The loss is \$30,000. One fireman
was killed by a falling wall.

DAMAGE OF \$300,000.

By Fire Which Swept a Bronx Factory
Today.

New York, June 12.--More than \$300,
000 damage was done by a fire which
swept the factory of the Stuyvesant & Wheel-
ock company and Charles H. Rogers
& Son bank and bar fixture factory in
the Bronx this morning.

BONFIRES TO SAVE CROPS.

Farmers About Rutland Kept Them
Burning All Night.

Rutland, June 12.--Frost leveled corn,
beans and tomatoes on the outskirts of
this city today. The temperature in
Rutland early this morning was 33 de-
grees. Many farmers kept large bon-
fires going in their gardens all night.

INSTANTLY KILLED.

George A. Warner Struck By Falling
Derrick.

Rutland, June 12.--George A. Warner
was instantly killed and Fremont Win-
ter, a teamster, had one leg broken by
a falling derrick used in loading marble
on cars at the Foley switch, two miles
from South Danby depot this morning.
The derrick was of the kind used by all
quarrying companies in this vicinity.
Warner was 40 years old and married,
and was one of the most prominent of
the younger men of the town. He had
held several town offices and was su-
perintending the loading when the ac-
cident occurred.

SEVEN CANDIDATES.

For Office of Sheriff of Franklin County
Thus Far.

St. Albans, June 12.--The following
is a list of names of the men who have
been mentioned for sheriffs in Franklin
county: George C. Holmes of Highgate,
George C. Stebbins of Sheldon, Harry N.
Martin of Richmond, B. W. James of
Swanton, George T. Taplin of Highgate,
William S. Kohle of Franklin and Dan-
iel F. Danforth of St. Albans.

Charged With Smuggling Wool.

Richford, June 12.--Alfred Como of
Sutton, P. Q., was arrested here yester-
day for smuggling wool and was taken
this morning to Burlington for a hear-
ing before U. S. Commissioner Geo. E.
Johnson.

Heavy Frosts Last Night.

St. Albans, June 12.--Heavy frosts
this morning were reported in the towns
of Hardwick and Shelton and a light
frost in Montgomery Center.

Garden Stuff Destroyed.

Braintree, June 12.--There was a
heavy frost on the ground here this
morning and much garden stuff was de-
stroyed.

WEST TOPSHAM.

Miss Mary Chalmers visited at home
several days last week.

Dr. J. A. Dow and wife were in Barre
last week on business.

A few from this vicinity attended the
circus at Montpelier Saturday.

Dr. J. A. Dow sold a nice horse to
Barre parties last week.

Fred Bagley is attending to the grind-
ing at the grist mill for a week.

Arthur White lost a valuable horse
last week by colic.

Quite a heavy frost last night, killing
a large lot of garden truck.

N. W. Koyes was injured quite se-
verely by being thrown from his wagon
last Sunday and striking on his head.

C. H. Hight has moved to his new
home which he purchased of Charles
Poole.

Fred Magoon and Ben. Chalmers re-
turned from Lake Morey Monday and
report a fine catch of all kinds of fish.

The Ladies' Aid will sell ice cream and
cake at the church each Saturday even-
ing during the hot season.

Mrs. Walter Mentzer of Boston is
visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. R.
Thurston.

SECOND DAY WITH MASONS

Grand Commandery of Ver-
mont at Burlington

E. B. TAFT ELECTED HEAD

At Election Yesterday Afternoon Dr. J.
Henry Jackson Was Chosen
the First Lieuten-
ant.

Burlington, June 12.--The second day
of some week opened with the 54th
annual convocation of the grand com-
mandery of Vermont, Charles A. Calderwood
of St. Johnsbury, grand commander, pre-
siding. There was an encouraging report
of growth. The parade was omitted.
There was one death during the year,
that of Grand Captain Horace C. Pierce
of Barton.

Elihu B. Taft of Burlington was elected
grand commander this afternoon, H.
H. Ross of Burlington, grand recorder,
and C. W. Whitcomb of Proctorsville,
grand treasurer. Tonight the 53rd an-
nual assembly of the grand council will
be held, with O. C. Baker of Brandon,
grand master.

This is an increase in every branch
as compared with last year.

The election resulted as follows: J.
Henry Jackson of Barre, first lieuten-
ant commander; D. S. Danforth of St.
Albans, second lieutenant commander;
G. H. Kingsley of Burlington, grand
minister of the state; G. F. Flanders,
White River Junction, grand prior; E.
B. Taft of Burlington, grand chancellor;
C. W. Whitcomb of Proctorsville, grand
treasurer; H. H. Ross of Burlington,
grand secretary; H. L. Stillson of Ben-
nington, grand architect and engineer;
C. A. Calderwood of St. Johnsbury,
grand hospitalier; H. S. Peck of Burling-
ton, grand master of ceremonies.

The following appointments were an-
nounced by Commander Perkins: Grand
standard bearer, C. L. Soule of Burling-
ton; grand captain of the guard, O. W.
Daley of White River Junction; grand
marshal, C. A. Chapman of Ferrisburgh;
grand sentinel, Albert Killam of Burling-
ton.

The annual meeting of the Vermont
consistory, Walter E. Ranger, now super-
intendent of education in Rhode Island,
presiding, was held last evening, when
the 30th degree was exemplified upon
a class of candidates.

HAD LIVED ENOUGH

DECLARED THIS YOUTH

Fred Hutchinson of Braintree Attempted
to Blow Off His Head With
Rifle.

Randolph, June 12.--Fred Hutchinson,
the 14 years old son of Mr. and Mrs.
John B. Hutchinson, who lives on the
Braintree near Beth, attempted suicide
early yesterday morning by shooting
himself with a rifle. The young lad got
up at five o'clock in the morning with
the determination to put an end to his
short life. Before the other members
of the family were up the boy took a
rifle, went to the rear door of the house
and attempted to send a bullet through
his head and would have succeeded, had
not the weight of the rifle as he pulled
the trigger, turned the barrel so that
the bullet tore off a part of the lad's ear
and caused quite a scalp wound but did
not penetrate the skull.

The explosion of the gun brought the
members of the family in the scene. A
physician was called, dressed the boy's
wounds and pronounced him not danger-
ously injured.

The boy was deliberate and says he
intended to kill himself and that he had
lived long enough. For several months
the boy's father has been kept from
home because of the illness of his moth-
er, Mrs. Rufus Hutchinson, who lives on
Elm street, and for the greater part of
the time Fred and his younger brother,
Richard, have had about all the farm
work to do, and also had to provide for
themselves in the house a good share
of the time. He is a very bright young
fellow and overwork is the cause at-
tributed for his attempt at suicide.

STRUCK FOR MORE PAY.

Rutland Railroad Men Want \$1.30 Per
Day.

Burlington, June 12.--Ten employees
of the Rutland railroad freight house
and four section men of the same road
went on a strike yesterday, the freight
men demanding more pay and the sec-
tion men wanting less work. According
to the freight men the trouble began
about a month ago, when they asked for
\$1.30 a day instead of \$1.25. On the
first of June they ceased work for ten
days more when something better than
their present pay would be offered them.
Yesterday they stopped work again and
were offered \$1.25 a day which they re-
fused. Of late the men have been ob-
liged to work night and received 12 1/2
cents per hour. Yesterday they claimed
they were offered 15 cents per hour. The
freight men also had to work on Sun-
day nights, being refrigerators cars etc.,
and yesterday that work was given to
the section men. When the latter men
learned of their new work four of them
also struck.

Four new men were taken on yester-
day in the freight house and more
will probably be given work today at
the old prices. A. E. Tryon, agent of
the Rutland railroad stated last even-
ing that he did not consider the men on
a strike. He said that men were always
leaving their positions and that they
were always ready to fill them.

TALK OF THE TOWN.

F. C. Batchelder of Braintree was in
the city today on business.

The regular meeting of the Ladies'
Aid society of St. Monica's church will
be held this evening at 7:30 o'clock
sharp at the convent.

CLASS DAY PROGRAMME.

Exercises of S. H. S. '06 at Opera House
Thursday Afternoon.

The class day exercises of the class
of 1906, Spaulding high school, will be
held at the opera house this year, in-
stead of at the Spaulding building. The
exercises will be held Thursday after-
noon, beginning at two o'clock, and those
wishing seats would do well to be there
on time. The programme is as fol-
lows:

Music--Piano Solo.....Bessie Spear
Address of Welcome.....James Carrawell
Class History.....Jessie Nelson
Recitation--"Markheim".....Georgiana Trail
Class Prophecy.....Misses Jones, McDonald, Mar-
den and Messers, Wallace and Ayers
Essays--Deeds, not Words (honorable
mention).....Mildred Phelps
Music--Duet, Spring Song.....Misses Scott and Jones
Class Will.....Max Fisher
Address to the Middle Class.....Mary McWhorter
Presentation to the School.....Arthur Gordon
Address to Graduating Class.....Theresa Scott
Music--Solo.....Theresa Scott
Presentations.....

HASKINS' VICTORY

IS INCREASING

He Now Has 324 Delegates, Either
Pledged or Favorable--Gordon Is
Second and Bell
Third.

Additional returns from the second
district congressional contest show that
Haskins swept Orleans county pretty
thoroughly. All the towns with the ex-
ception of Craftsbury, which voted for
Bell, will give their support to the Bra-
tleboro man, increasing the Brattleboro
man's sweeping victory. As the figures
now stand, Haskins has 324 delegates
either pledged outright or favorable to
him; Gordon has 30 either pledged or
favorable; Bell has 10 pledged. This
leaves 14 votes yet to be credited. They
lie in three counties.

MOVING PICTURES.

San Francisco Disaster Shown in Mov-
ing Pictures at The Strong.

Moving pictures were again the at-
traction at The Strong Theatre last
evening. San Francisco pictures had
been featured in the advertising and
were not a disappointment to the large
number of people present. Colored
views of buildings and places of inter-
est in the city before the earthquake
and fire were shown, followed by pic-
tures of some of the same places after
the disaster had fallen. One moving
picture was especially commendable. It
showed what the camera saw while on
a wagon on a drive through the city,
three miles one way and two the other.
The scenes of desolation and destruction
were pictured clearly, with the people
moving about as if in the life. There
were, besides, a number of humorous pic-
tures of more than ordinary worth,
while the last picture was a hand-pat-
ent one sent from Paris and taking 11
minutes in the showing. All in all the
evening's entertainment was entirely ac-
ceptable.--Free Press.

At the opera house Thursday evening.
For the benefit of the ushers.

TAKES NEW POSITION.

Weather Observer Shaw Becomes Local
Forecaster.

Northfield, June 12.--W. A. Shaw,
weather observer at the government sta-
tion located at Norwich university, is
in receipt of a letter from Prof. Willis
L. Moore, chief of the United States
weather bureau, Washington, that he
has been promoted to local forecaster,
to take effect July 1. Mr. Shaw said
that he saw no reason why the change
would affect his residence. The promo-
tion was probably made because of the
recognition and importance of the station
here. Mr. Shaw entered the employ of
the government as a weather observer
October 30, 1888, being located at this
station for the past ten years. He has
been stationed at Boston, New York
city, Portland, Me., Pierre, So. Da., and
Sioux City, Ia., previous to coming to
this town.

FUNERAL THIS AFTERNOON.

Galen C. Maxham's Remains Buried at
Northfield Center.

Northfield, June 12.--The funeral of
Galen C. Maxham, who died on Friday,
took place this afternoon at his late
home at the Center village. The Rev.
E. W. Statte officiating. Interment
was made in the family lot at Elm-
wood. Mr. Maxham was a resident of
Northfield since 1861, coming here from
Stoughton, Mass., and has always been
in the best of health until about ten
days before his death.